

An extreme melanic form of *Ectropis bistortata* Goeze (L.:Geometridae) in Kent

On 28 March 1998, a fresh male *Ectropis bistortata*, of a form I had not previously encountered elsewhere, came to my garden m.v. light at Dartford, West Kent. The moth was black, including the head, thorax and abdomen, the wings adorned only with a well defined whitish submarginal line and a narrower, less prominent, wavy marginal line. It would seem to be ab. *extrema* Rebel and correspond to ab. *nigra* Banks of *E. consonaria*. The aptly named ab. *extrema* would appear to be rare; it is not noted by Kettlewell (*The Evolution of Melanism*, 1973) as one of the melanic forms of *E. bistortata* found in Britain.

In north-west Kent, despite the habit of resting on tree trunks, this species has shown minimal tendency towards melanism. Plant (*Larger Moths of the London Area*, 1993) makes no mention of melanism. Chalmers-Hunt (*Butterflies and Moths of Kent*, sup. in *Ent. Rec.* 89) notes two less extreme melanics from Aylesford 16.vii.1956 and 11.viii.1957, referable to ab. *defessaria* Freyer, to which I can add two for Dartford, 13 and 17.viii.1988.— B.K. WEST, 36 Briar Road, Dartford, Kent DA5 2HN.

Unseasonal occurrence of *Pieris brassicae* L. (Lep.: Pieridae)

Can any reader of the *Record* explain this? On 6 February 1999 I found several larvae of *P. brassicae* on a purple sprouting broccoli plant in my garden in Willaston, Wirral. They were about half grown (25mm), so presumably hatched from the ova in January. When were the ova laid? Although winter in the Wirral peninsula is usually mild (compared with, say, East Anglia) these larvae must have survived four or five frosty nights. The plant in question is one in a row of five, and all the other plants were free of larvae.— R.G. AINLEY, "Burford", Briardale Road, Willaston, Wirral, Cheshire L64 1TB.

Hazards of butterfly collecting – The birth of a lepidopterist – Delhi, 1951

I find the question: "How did you become interested in butterflies?" to be second only to "How long does a butterfly live?". A quick count shows that I have been asked both questions in at least fifty countries. I have just moved – or relocated as it is known in development jargon – to the Philippines and I have already been asked both questions a least 40 times. Some people think that Manila is an odd place to write the definitive book on West African butterflies, but my wife, Nancy, was appointed to a very interesting United Nations post here, and a dutiful husband follows. About 100,000 African butterflies, my library, my microscope and all my genitalia slides, as well as all my field notes and slides are on the good (or so I fervently hope) ship m/s Maas, docking in Manila a week from now.